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## AWARD RECIPIENTS

### 2001 OPM Director's Award for Outstanding ADR Programs

The winners of the 2001 OPM Director's Award for Outstanding ADR Programs were announced at an award ceremony held at OPM on October 25, 2001. The award recipients are: the Department of the Air Force, Charleston Air Force Base, and Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center at Tinker Air Force Base; the Department of Energy; Northwest Mountain Region of the Federal Aviation Administration; and the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. In addition, an Honorable Mention was given to the National Imagery and Mapping Agency. Short descriptions of these ADR programs follow. Further information is contained in OPM's **Alternative Dispute Resolution: A Resource Guide**.

**Department of the Air Force**  
***Air Force Alternative Dispute Resolution Program***

**Charleston Air Force Base**  
***Charleston AFB Alternative Dispute Resolution Program***

**Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center**  
***Tinker AFB Alternative Dispute Resolution Program***

The Department of the Air Force (Headquarters), Charleston Air Force Base, and Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center are recognized for the system-wide implementation of an integrated alternative dispute resolution program. The programs' methods of evaluation and strong institutional support are particularly noteworthy. Building on the agency's ADR successes in early 1990's, the Secretary of the Air Force issued a policy directing

1999 requiring the development of a five-year ADR Plan. This comprehensive strategic plan was published in March 2001. The goals of the program are to: (1) promote voluntary informal and consensual dispute resolution; (2) promote creative, efficient, and sensible outcomes in dispute resolution; and (3) reduce the tangible and intangible costs, in time and resources, associated with dispute resolution. The program covers Equal Employment Opportunity complaints, unfair labor practice disputes, Merit Systems Protection Board appeal, negotiated grievance procedures disputes, and administrative grievances as well as other types of disputes. Facilitation and mediation are the primary ADR techniques used. The program utilizes internal neutrals but also uses personnel from shared neutrals programs where they are available. On a case-by-case basis, private mediators may be used. Both internal and external mediators must meet minimum criteria established by the program. The agency has an extensive ADR training program that, among other things, includes basic, intermediate, and advanced mediation courses that are supplemented by a mediation/mentor program. As part of an annual review of installation-level ADR programs, training needs are identified and prioritized. In the three years, the agency has used ADR successfully to resolve 4,276 workplace disputes and achieved a resolution rate between 75 and 82 percent.

### **Department of Energy** ***Department of Energy Headquarters Mediation Program***

The Department of Energy Headquarters Mediation Program is recognized as a maturing program that has constantly evolved to fit the particular needs of its customers. Its very strong use of coaching and guiding disputants before and through the mediation process is particularly noteworthy. The program began in 1991 with a policy statement that its goals were to: (1) diminish friction, (2) increase productivity, and (3) reduce escalation of disputes. The program accepts referrals on workplace dispute issues from the Equal Employment Opportunity, the employee assistance program, the employee relations office, the labor relations office, labor union representatives, ombudsmen, managers and supervisors, and the Office of Employee Concerns (whistleblower issues). In Fiscal Year 2000, the program began using private mediators after conducting a "mini-RFP" following the GSA schedule. Under that process, the Center for Dispute Settlement was selected as the mediator providing the program personnel conduct a variety of ADR training/marketing initiatives at the agency. All employees who participate in mediation receive individual coaching, both before and during the process, from the manager assigned to the agency's ADR program. The agency has developed a Mediation Survey form that is returned to the head of the mediation program manager anonymously. The mediators also evaluate each mediation performed. In Fiscal Year 1999, there was a 237% increase in the number of cases referred to the program and in Fiscal Year 2000, 64% of the cases referred were settled through mediation. There was an approximate savings per case of \$30,000 to \$50,000 with "immeasurable savings" associated with an improvement in morale, work environment, trust, and communication.

### **Federal Aviation Administration** ***Northwest Alternative Dispute Resolution Program***

The ADR program of the Northwest Mountain Region of the Federal Aviation Administration is recognized for its efficient and creative use of limited resources in its design and implementation. The program's strong reliance on a proactive approach to addressing conflict and conflict resolution and its creative use of training methods (e.g., drawing on the resources of a highly-regarded local dispute resolution center) to help people know when and how to use ADR are also noteworthy. The agency established the Northwest ADR Program in October 1991. Its stated goals were to: (1) strengthen its already effective Internal Discrimination Complaint Process, (2) increase the diversity of the conflict resolution techniques in use, (3) eliminate a small backlog of EEO discrimination complaints, and (4) be one of the first Civil Rights Staffs to establish an ADR program. The program covers EEO disputes using the ADR techniques of mediation, conciliation, negotiation, and facilitation. The agency primarily uses internal neutrals but also does use mediators provided through a local shared neutrals program. The agency's strategic plan has goals for training managers, supervisors, and non-supervisory employees in mediation awareness. Training materials including videos are available and have been used by others outside the agency. The overall resolution rate of disputes is 85.1%. The agency uses a complaint tracking report, in-depth reviews, mediation evaluation sheets, and training course evaluations to evaluate results under the program.

### **Department of Health and Human Services** ***Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*** ***The Ombuds Program***

The Ombuds Program at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is recognized for its creation of a program designed specifically to adapt and institutionalize the ombuds concept to the particular needs, functions, and structure of the agency. The program's recordkeeping and accountability initiatives were also particularly noteworthy. Following what it considered to be unacceptably low scores on an annual survey by the Department of Health and Human Services on the quality of worklife for employees at the agency, the Ombuds Program was set up in 1999. Its goal was to increase the quality and quantity of communications within the agency. The program covers all forms of disputes, conflicts, issues, and questions. The ADR techniques used include, but are not limited to, in-house coaching, shuttle diplomacy, facilitation, and mediation, all conducted by the program ombuds. The ombuds conducts all training and has reached virtually every agency employee with some form of introduction to the program. The ombuds' training and expertise is available to other Federal Government organizations. The program is evaluated using a five-step nested measurement model to track its impact. The components of this model are case tracking with great specificity, an ombuds program user questionnaire, an ombuds program perception survey, and the human resources management index measuring the quality of worklife. A key measurement of the program's success is that the agency's quality of worklife rating is the highest ever recorded within the Department of Health and Human Services.

### **HONORABLE MENTION ADR Program**

#### **National Imagery and Mapping Agency Alternative Dispute Resolution Program**

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Program at the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) is recognized for the thoughtful manner in which it was developed as the young agency itself was evolving. Particularly commendable is the program's ability to successfully weave in various aspects of its varied predecessor organizations and to identify and overcome several institutional barriers, including high-level resistance, geographic barriers relating to a multiplicity of locations, and the reluctance of other organizations to cooperate. The program was established in 1999 to help the agency meet its Strategic Goal of "shaping its workforce infrastructure to ensure mission success in the 21st century." The program primarily uses the ADR techniques of facilitation and mediation but also may use fact-finding, counseling, and other techniques. The program covers all types of disputes except for those involving crimes, conflicts of interest, security matters, and circumstances where the applicable collective bargaining unit representative has not consented to participate in ADR. NIMA may come from in-house rosters, shared neutrals rosters, or from private sources. ADR training includes offering of a training module on dispute resolution at NIMA College, a training facility open to all NIMA employees. The program uses employee evaluation forms and a state-of-the-art database to assess the effectiveness of ADR at the agency. Since the program began, there has been a decline in litigation and fewer formal complaints in the EEO area and increasing numbers of employees are resolving disputes informally and without resort to costly litigation. The program has helped enhance the value of the agency's core value "creating a culture that promotes trust, diversity, personal and professional growth, mutual respect, and communications."

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